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ABSTRACT

The mass media are valuable tools for influencing atttiudes toward women and for helping women to evaluate their roles in society. This paper discusses advantages and disadvantages of radio, printed materials, television, and film as socialization tools; the need for special attention to improving the status of women; new media products designed especially to aid in improving women's status; and efforts by organizations around the world to improve the image of women in the media and to make the media more responsive to women's needs. The paper then presents bibliographies of materials dealing with the status of women, divided according to the following categories: publications on the status of women around the world, films on women's roles in numerous different countries, and research reports on women in countries around the world. (GW)

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The Uses of Media to Improve the Status of Women on an International Scale

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The Scope: Women and Development

On December 15, 1975, the United Nations General Assembly voted to proclaim the period 1976-1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women with the emphasis on equality, development and peace. In July of 1975, the United Nations sponsored the first world conference ever held on the status of women;[1] the conference, held in Mexico City, adopted a "World Plan of Action" establishing guidelines for national governments, as well as regional and international bodies, to assist in the integration of women into the full social mainstream--politically, economically and socially.

The Mexico City conference called for national, regional and international research activities, data collection and analysis on all aspects of the status of women. The research efforts were called for: 1) to determine the real status of women in countries around the world; 2) to debunk some of the myths that have circumscribed the daily lives of women; 3) to determine what efforts must be taken to fully integrate women into the social mainstream.

The mass media have been major tools in this effort to improve the status of women. According to one UNESCO report, the mass media are valuable tools for influencing attitudes toward women and for helping women to evaluate their roles in society. This paper examines some of the uses of media that have been made in the efforts to change

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[1]The United Nations indicated its continued commitment to improving the status of women by calling for a second international conference on the status of women for 1980.

attitudes toward women, increase their social participation and improve the status of their daily lives. It also explores some of the avenues that are available for using media in the socialization process.

The United Nations, with its ties to all parts of the globe, is the organization that has most directly supported efforts to use the media to improve the status of women. A UNESCO document reported:

> In Upper Volta, special radio broadcasts were used as a means of reinforcing the adult education classes for women given in the village . . . . In Nepal, . . . a concentrated effort is now planned to create a dramatic radio serial revolving around a woman teacher in a village school who is trained in the project [adult education]. The use of mass media presupposes general availability of radio receivers while the use of printed materials naturally presupposes at least a minimum level of literacy. The mass media will therefore have a more immediate impact in an urban setting.[2]

The Available Media

Radio appears to be the medium with the most potential as a tool of socialization. In underdeveloped countries or countries with large rural populations separated from some of the opportunities available in an urban setting, radio plays a crucial informational and entertainment role. At a conference on the image of women in the mass media,[3] sponsored by the OAS and held in the Dominican Republic, several of the representatives spoke of the importance of radio in their countries: the representative from the Dominican Republic called radio the most important medium of communication in her country, based on the number of radio users; the representative from Costa Rica called radio the

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[2]Press Release, U.S. National Commission for UNESCO, December 30, 1975. The contact person was Barbara Good.

[3]Seminario Medios de Communicacion e Imagen de la Mujer, August 1-5, 1977, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Sponsored by the OAS, the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) and the government of the Dominican Republic. Summary information on the conference may be obtained from the: Organization of American States, Inter-American Commission of Women, Washington, D.C. 20006. This researcher was the U.S. delegate to that conference.

most popular medium in her country; and, the representative from Argentina reported that twenty-three million people in her country had access to radio. One representative stated that in rural areas, where illiteracy is extremely high, a common scene is for a villager to do errands with a transister radio turned on. The portability of the radio has increased its utilization at home, in the fields, at the markets and in the schools.

One additional advantage of radio is its inexpensive developmental costs. A radio station is considerably less expensive to operate than is a television station or even a major newspaper. The raw stock of a radio production--the magnetic recording tape--is relatively inexpensive, is reusable, easily edited, easily mailed or shipped from location to location and is highly durable. Also, a radio production facility is easily protable requiring only a tape recorder with microphone and a minimum of editing tools and production materials. Radio appears to be the medium most easily adaptable to socialization projects because it breaks through the barriers of illiteracy, is accessible to individuals in nearly every country, is inexpensive, portable and extremely flexible in terms of its production techniques and utilization.

Printed materials, especially newspapers and magazines, appear to be the second best tools in a socialization project. At the Latin American conference on women and the media mentioned above, the representative from the Dominican Republic reported that in her country there were six newspapers with a total of one million readers while the total population numbered five million. This situation is fairly representative of many areas in the world; even when materials are read by large numbers of readers, the total audience is divided among the available

newspapers and magazines. In many parts of the world, the majority of the available magazines are imported from the United States and Western Europe; this means that the opportunity for utilizing available publishing houses is often limited. Printed materials can be important socialization tools, however, especially textbooks and newspapers and magazines with large national circulations. The disadvantages of printed materials are that they demand literacy for utilization, are frequently not available, frequently cannot be produced in a particular location and are more adaptable to urban settings than to rural.

Television has great potential for socialization projects, but television requires large financial backing and requires a relatively high level of media sophistication to adequately tap its full capacities. Even in urbanized areas local productions are frequently few in number and frequently prepared with little financial expenditure and little media expertise. In Latin America, for example, most television programs are imported and are dubbed into Spanish; "Kojak," "Barretta," the "Flintstones" and reruns of reruns are as common in Latin America as they are in the United States. Television is an excellent medium for socialization in urbanized areas where media access is available, but, it is a very difficult medium to use in rural areas where facilities are limited and available money is low.

Film is also an effective tool for conveying social messages, but, film, like television, requires a relatively high level of media sophistication to adequately develop and use. Film can be an expensive medium to produce and requires a higher level of technical knowledge in the production stage than does radio. Film also requires specialized equipment for viewing and can be shown only to limited audiences at any

given time. Radio, then, appears to be the medium with the greatest potential for socialization use on an international scale followed by print media, film and television.

The Uses of Media in Development and in Socialization

The utilization of the media as socialization instruments to improve the status of women takes two forms: 1) the development of specialized media products for this purpose; 2) the reform of the currently available media. The impetus stems from the recognition that in most countries women hold social, political and economic advantages to a much lesser extent than do men. Whether the country is developed or underdeveloped the status of women compared to the status of men, measured on standards of literacy, political participation, social mobility, employment mobility, economic independence and legal protections, is considerably less favorable. Just one example of the need for special attention to the status of women is evident in a UNESCO report:

> Illiteracy is appreciably higher among women than men. In 1970, women constituted 60 per cent of the world's illiterates, according to UNESCO statistics, for a total of 468 million of the world's 784 illiterates. Moreover, illiteracy is increasing more rapidly among women than among men . . . . Between 1960 and 1970, the number of female illiterates increased by 40 million as compared with 8 million among men.[4]

Another convincing documentation of the thrust for improving the status of women comes from a joint UNESCO-International Laborer Organization inquiry into the status of women in five countries--Argentina, the

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[4]U.S. National Commission for UNESCO Press Release, December 30, 1975. The contact person was Barbara Good.

Ivory Coast, Lebanon, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka.[5] The studies of the status of women in these five countries was conducted in 1974 by the UNESCO National Commissions of the five countries and the studies focused on opportunities available to women in education, training and employment. The investigation found that:

> In all these countries, which differ widely geographically and culturally, women still do not enjoy in practice the equal status with men to which the law entitles them. They have not yet achieved equality in education; in earnings; or in job opportunities and responsibility.[6]

The commitment to improving the status of women on a global basis can be demonstrated, not just in terms of commitment by the United Nations, but also in terms of commitment by individual governments and agencies. In the U.S., for example, the commitment to the advancement of women was demonstrated by the passage in 1973 of the Percy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act which was designed to assure that all U.S. bilateral development assistance pay special attention to integrating women into the development process.

The Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM) has been a long-standing organization concerned with the status of women in the Americas. CIM has sponsored conferences on "Women and Leadership," "Women and Educa-

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[5]Another study will be made of the status of women in seven nations--Brazil, Ghana, Japan, Tunisia, the USSR, the United Kingdom and the U.S. These studies will focus on the advancement of women in such fields as education, employment, social welfare, family planning and legal rights. They will identify areas in which women have made significant strides and will include an analysis of obstacles that have been, or will need to be, overcome in advancing the status of women.

[6]Anthony Brock, "A UNESCO Inquiry of Women's Status In Five Countries." The UNESCO Courier, August-September, 1974, p. 39. The Courier is published in 15 languages monthly by UNESCO.

tional Opportunities" and "Women and the Mass Media." CIM is just one example of the independent agency working to improve the status of women.

Media Products

In discussing new media products designed especially to aid in improving the status of women, several examples can be cited. In the Netherlands an organization, "Man Vrouw Maatschappij,"[7] (Man-Woman-Society) has developed a series of publications documenting the status of women in the Netherlands and the steps needed to improve the lives of women. Some of the publications include:

"The Last Five Years in Women's Emancipation in the Netherlands" by Hanneke Van Buuren (in English).

"Bewustwording 2; consciousness raising, 9 persoonlijke verhalen"

"Media, wat bieden TV, radio en Tina uw Kind? Informatie centra, over het Hoe? en Daarom!"

"Kinderopuang; overdruk vit 'Ouders van Nu'"

"Verjaardagskalender; mannen in de zog. Vrouwen rollen"

Another example comes from Australia where a group of housewives in Melbourne wrote a book Brian's Wife, Jenny's Mum[8] documenting the physical and psychological status of women housewives in Melbourne's outer suburbs. The book developed in an adult education class where the women were encouraged to write about themselves, their experiences their hopes.

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[7]The address for The Man Vrouw Maatschappij is Posthes 746 Den Haag.

[8]Brian's Wife, Jenny's Mum is published by Dove Communications Pty. Ltd., 203 Darling Road, East Malvern, Vic., 3145, Australia, r.r.p. $1.95.

> That the writing of "ordinary housewives" should be published is an event in its own right. In this case, the writing centres on the authors' own lives and experiences, and so gives life and feeling to the cold statistics of low self-esteem, loss of identity and neurosis among suburban women. The first section of Brian's Wife, Jenny's Mum focuses on the experience of being a housewife. The second section documents the inner experience of the return to the mainstream of social life--usually through adult education and work.[9]

Other types of media products have been produced by agencies and/or governments to serve particular purposes. The Red Cross, UNESCO and other agencies and governments have created films and other forms of media to inform women of pre-natal care, care of infants, advantages of adult education and so forth, but, these sources are sometimes reluctant to invest in efforts purely for the purpose of upgrading women politically and economically.

In the developed countries women have created their own media products to serve as instruments for information, unity and consciousness raising. These efforts have been demonstrated by the above mentioned media products in the Netherlands and in Australia. The United States has been particularly active in this regard with the creation of Ms. magazine, publications by women's organizations such as NOW, Women's Political Caucus, Women In Communication, and so forth. Most of the media products designed especially to improve the status of women politically, socially and economically come from the developed countries. In the underdeveloped countries the media products are frequently designed to improve the daily lives of women in terms of improved care of the person and of the family.

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[9]From Dr. Don Edgar, Reader in Sociology, La Trobe University, Australia. From the publisher's announcement of the book's publication.

Media Reform Movement

The other use of the media as a socialization tool has been the efforts to reform the existing media. This effort has been particularly active. At the World Conference of the International Women's Year, the delegates introduced a section on mass communication media in the World Plan of Action. The document reported:

> A major obstacle in improving the status of women lies in public attitudes and values regarding women's roles in society. The mass communication media have great potential as a vehicle for social change and could exercise a significant influence in helping to remove prejudices and stereotypes, accelerating the acceptance of women's new and expanding roles in society, and promoting their integration into the development process as equal partners.[10]

The action steps advocated by this conference were:

1. Governmental and non-governmental organizations should encourage and support national, regional and international research to determine the image of women and men portrayed by the media; [and encourage research to determine] the negative and positive influences exercised by the media in their various roles as conveyors of information, entertainment, education and advertising.

2. Governmental and non-governmental organizations should also take steps to ensure that information is provided on the current situation of women in various countries, with particular emphasis on the changing roles of both sexes.

3. Those in control of media should seek to raise public consciousness with respect to the changing roles of women and men.

4. The media should depict the roles of women from all walks of life throughout history, including women in rural areas and women of minority groups.

5. The media should also seek to develop in women confidence in themselves and in other women, and a sense of their own value and importance as human beings.

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[10]From the United Nations World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, June 19-July 2, 1975, "World Plan of Action."

6. Women should be appointed in greater numbers in media management, decision making, and other capacities as editors, columnists, reporters, producers and the like.

In Canada a variety of women's groups and various agencies have contributed to an evaluation of the roles of women in the media. Just one example is the publication "Male and Female Roles in Ontario Educational Communication Authority Programming,"[11] a major research project completed in 1976. The document evaluates male/female roles, themes, program types, voice overs, target audiences, age differentials, character behaviors, type of character activities, occupational roles, and decision making capabilities. The study finds that women are underrepresented in some programming types and age groups and makes recommendations for changes.

In the United States, the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights completed, in the summer of 1977, a study of women and minorities in television titled "Window Dressing On the Set."[12] This report examined: the portrayal of women and minorities in commercial television including news and drama; equal employment opportunities in broadcasting; and, broadcast regulations in the public interest.

Another report, completed by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and titled "A Report on the Task Force on Women in Public

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[11] Male and Female Roles in EOCA Programming, Report No. 1976-13, September, 1976. The Ontario Educational Communication Authority, P.O. Box 200, Station Q, Toronto, Ontario, M4T 2T1.

[12] Window Dressing On the Set: Women and Minorities in Television, August, 1977. The U.S. Civil Rights Commission, Washington, D.C. 20425.

Broadcasting"[13] examined male/female characterizations in public broadcasting radio and television programs; numbers of male/female employees; types of employment positions of male/female employees; and, numbers of males and females in programs.

These reports and publications are just three examples of the major efforts being made by organizations around the world to improve the image of women in the media and to make the media more responsive to the needs of women. Conferences have been held in many locations to spotlight the demands that media aid women in their drive to become citizens participating fully in the societies in which they live. At the Seminario Medios de Communicacion e Imagen de la Mujer held in the Dominican Republic in the summer of 1977, a delegate from each member nation of the OAS reported on the status of women in her country and on the role that the media play in her country. The delegates' particular concerns were:

> That textbooks are not available to all children (especially children in rural areas) and when available textbooks present very traditional roles for men and women which do not allow the children to explore a variety of adult roles.
>
> News of special interest to women is not considered to be "hard news." News of interest to women is usually placed in a special section and is not considered "real news."
>
> The only women's news that is frequently reported is news of fashions, cosmetics, home decorating or recipes.
>
> In broadcasting, women are frequently disregarded. In many countries, the only programming especially designed for women are soap operas and women's "chat" programs.

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[13]Carolyn Isber and Muriel Cantor, "Report of the Task Force on Women in Public Broadcasting," Washington, D.C.: Corporation for Public Broadcasting, 1111 16th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, 1975.

> There is too much media coverage of issues that are not relevant to women. Particularly mentioned were the activities of Jacqueline Onassis, Carolyn of Monoco, fashions that were financially out of the reach of the vast majority of women, and the like.
>
> The media need to more fully cover the activities of feminist groups in the various countries.
>
> Advertising dollars tend to be more important than the value of women's lives.

The seminar adopted guidelines for the media which will be distributed by the OAS to member nations of that organization. The guidelines are a first step in the efforts to get the media to treat women as responsible citizens involved in a variety of social endeavors. The conference created much distress on the part of the media barons who demonstrated a reluctance to accept women as equal social participants. The conference did alert the media barons to the issues of concern to women and to the fact that women are watching their performance. Conferences of this nature have been held in other locations and the impact may be gradual, but certain.

In recent years a variety of research has developed on the status of women in various countries. A check of Social Science Abstracts for 1970 revealed little research on the status of women around the world, but, that same abstracting source in 1976 and 1977 listed a wide variety of research completed on the status of women in locations around the world. This research is exemplified in the bibliography following the text of this paper. Every indication is that there is wide spread concern about the status of women around the world and that the media will play a major role in improving the status of women.

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Women of Afghanistan,(M.P) Juvenile Films, Grise' Inc., made by Arthur C. Twomey, Rld. by Sound Book Press Society, 1975. 75-701146.

Illustrates the changing role of women in Afghanistan society as purdah and veil are dropped and women take their place along with men in building the nation.

AFRICA

Women of Africa, (F.S), Unesco, Rld. to U.S. by Unipub, 1966, 70-740223.

Traces the emancipation of African women and explores their role in the development of their countries from tribal societies to modern states.

AFRICAN TRIBE

Women of the Tou Bou, 16mm, LC NO. 74-700405, Prod. and Dist. Phoenix Films, Inc., 1973.

Presents a documentary on the African Tribe known as the Toubou. Explains that the tribe revolves around a strong matriarchy but is extremely protective of their fragilely beautiful, but strong, enduring, graceful women.

BANGLADESH

Family of Bangladesh, (F.S), Encyclopedia Britannica Educ. Corp., 1975, 75-735561.

Describes customs and habits of family life in Bangladesh. For elementary grades.

CANADA

A Women's Place, (M.P), Information Canada, Ottowa, Made by International Cinemedia Center, Montreal, Rld. by National Film Board of Canada, 1974, LC 74-733108.

1. Women-History
2. Women-Health & Hygiene
3. Feminism

Images, Biology and destiny, myths, women's movement

CANADA-ENGLAND

Ms. Canada Visits England, (M.P), Visual productions, Toronto, 1973, 74-703422.

Tells about a woman TV executive who visits England to line up a TV show for Canada.

1. Television-Production and direction
2. Women executives - Canada

WESTERN EUROPE & AMERICA

Women on the March, 16mm, 2 parts Victorian-W.W.I W.W. I-1958, Dist., McGraw-Hill Text films, Prod. National Film Board of Canada, 1958.

Shows the struggle of women for equal rights from the beginning of the suffragette movement in England to the present. Includes footage dating back to Victorian Era. Shows how women of U.S., Canada and Europe have achieved status in world councils, politics, and many professions.

GHANA

Fear Woman, (M.P.) United Nations, Made by U.N., Office of Public Information, Rld. by Contemporary Films/McGraw-Hill, 1971. 73-714857.

A documentary about the status of women in Ghana, noting their reputation for independence. Points out that women run a large part of the retail trade of the country, and that they are beginning to enter into areas which have power and influence.

INDIA

Family of India, Enc. Britannica Educ. Corp., 1975, 75-735562.

Describes customs and habits of family life in India. For elementary grades.

Women of India, 16mm, Prod. and Dist., India Government Films Division, 1964, LC NO. F167-2332.

Presents a documentary tracing the achievements of women in various activities, arts and sciences in modern India. Includes a brief historical sketch of women's role in Indian history and society.

ISRAEL

Promise Shared, Producer: ADL, Dist: Am. Friends of Middle East.

Peasants working women in Israel: including labor union officials, a kibbutz secretary, and attorney and a newspaper publisher who takes a hard look at the legal and social status of women in their country. Features divergent opinons based on differences in age, experience and expectations, and an analysis of the women's movement in the U.S. as it affects Israel.

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Family of Japan, Encyclopedia Britannica Educ. Corp., 1975, 75-735563.

Describes customs and habits of family life in India. For elementary grades.

JAVA

Family of Java, Encyclopedia Britannica Educ. Corp., 1975, 75-735564.

Describes customs and habits of family life in India. For elementary grades.

CHAMULA-MEXICO INDIAN

Women of Chamula, 16mm, Prod. and Dist., Hartley Productions, 1969, LC NO. 79-702732.

Shows the life of a Mexican Indian family in the Chiapas where the Indians live in much the same way as did their Mayan ancesters a 1000 years ago. Describes mother and her activities.

MOSLEM

Women Up in Arms, 16mm., modern teenaged - traditional grandmother, Prod. U.N., Dist. McGraw Hill Text films, A66.

Views the women's place in the Moslem society in a study of a 17 year old Tunisian girl who dances to Beatles records, her mother who removed her veil seven years before, and her grandmother who maintains old traditional ways.

NEVE UR (MIDDLE EAST)

Women of Neve Ur, 16mm, Prod. NETV, Dist, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (no date).

Depicts the courage of Israeli women who live in the Kibbutz of Neve Ur and the lack of hostility toward those who have sworn to destroy them.

PAKISTAN

Women of Pakistan, 16mm, Prod, EMPAK, Dist. American Friends of the Middle East, 1963.

Depicts activities and colorful costumes of Pakistan women. Presents the work of the Women's National Guard.

RUSSIA

Women of Russia, 16mm., (no narration) LC NO. 78-701846, Prod and Dist., International Film Foundation, 1968.

Examines the life of the Russian women who work hard for their families and country. No narration.

THAILAND

Women of Thailand, Ency. Britannica Educ. Corp., 1975.

THIRD WORLD

Women Artists: The Third World (slide set) Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975, 75-733528.

Presents views of paintings and sculpture by American women of African, Japanese, Chinese and Mexican descent.

U.S.

The Federal Women's Program, (M.P), U.S. Civil Service Coms., Rld. by National A.V. Center, 1973., 75-701341.

Deals with Federal Women's Program. Emphasizes the achievement of equal employment opportunity for women. Discusses the status of women in the Nations work force and asks managers and supervisors to identify their problem areas, examine their attitudes on employment of women, and to take affirmative action to assure equal employment opportunity for women.

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